[11th December 1923

Rai Bahadur Sir K. VENKATAREDDI NAYUDU :—" With your permission, Sir, I shall try to clear the situation. Though it may be that only Rs. 55,461 has been spent already, obligations must have been incurred which go much higher than that figure. I may say that it exceeds a lakh and odd rupees."

Mr. S. SATYAMURTI :—" Sir, I did not ask any such question."

Rai Bahadur Sir K. VENKATAREDDI NAYUDU :—" The hon. the President wanted to know whether the figures given by the hon. the Minister for Development were correct."

The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" Probably I was in error—(laughter)—and my interruption was uncalled for."

III

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE BOARD OF INDUSTRIES.

The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" I have to announce that the following candidates have been nominated for election as representatives of the Council on the Board of Industries :—

Mr. J. A. Saldanha,
Mr. K. V. Ramachari,
Diwan Bahadur K. Suryanarayanamurti Nayudu,
Khan Bahadur P. Khalif-ul-lah Sahib,
Mr. Sami Venkatachala Chettiyar.

" As the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies, viz., 2, election by means of single transferable vote has to be held. The Secretary will deliver to the Members a list of nominated candidates at 1-30 p.m. to-day and hon. Members are requested to vote for two candidates and return the voting papers to the Secretary before 11 a.m. to-morrow."

IV

COMMUNICATION TO THE COUNCIL.

The SECRETARY laid on the table * G.O. No. 1054, Finance, dated 4th December 1923, regarding the constitution of the Finance Committee for the remainder of the year 1923–24.

11-15 a.m.

V

MOTIONS ON MATTERS OF GENERAL PUBLIC INTEREST.

EXECUTION OF THE POLAVARAM ISLAND PROJECT IN THE GODAVARI DISTRICT.

Rai Bahadur Sir K. VENKATAREDDI NAYUDU :—" Mr. President, I beg to move :—

2. *That this Council recommends to the Government the immediate execution of the irrigation scheme known as the Polavaram Island Project in the district of Godavari, the investigation of which has been completed in all its aspects.*

This scheme, Sir, relates to the island of Polavaram in the taluk of Amalapur in the Godavari district. It is an island in the sense that it is surrounded by

* Printed as Appendix on page 304 infra.

11th December 1923] [Sir K. Venkatareddi Nayudu]

water on all sides. Two branches of the river Godavari bound it on the east, north and west, while on the south the Bay of Bengal borders it. The whole of the taluk, together with the adjoining villages, forms what is known as the central delta of the Godavari and its system. It is only this portion of the island of Polavaram that is not irrigated, because it is intercepted by a branch of the river known as Vridda Gowtami. This scheme involves the construction of an aqueduct over that branch of the river and taking water by means of a canal which passes alongside the embankments of the river down to the island itself. If only the aqueduct is constructed over this branch of the river, water can be taken. Sir, there is every facility to undertake this work. The commandable area is about 23,134 acres. There are eleven villages in this island with about 20,000 people occupying them. At present the cultivation is carried on with the precarious aid of the rain water or of the Godavari water in high floods, and it is only in high floods that water can be taken from the Godavari and the river is not always in high floods. When the floods are low, and when the river is not in floods at all, the sea water has its ebb and flow with the result that the water will be saltish and not fit for cultivation. The whole island is surrounded by embankments. But unfortunately, added to the precarious measure of the rains and the river water, other difficulties like the breaches in the bund on the south have to be faced. Some 20 years ago the southern bund was breached with the result that the sea water had its own inundation and crops were submerged year after year. During the last twenty years it was perhaps the order of the day that there was suspension in the kist because the crops had failed. So far as the zamindari villages are concerned—there are four of them, the others being Government villages—the suspension of kists and rent suits were very common. The result is that to-day we find that this portion of the district surrounded on all sides by plenty and prosperity is in a very wretched and unhappy condition of misery and poverty.

"This work was originally intended to be started about the year 1913. We first heard of this scheme in that year, but though ten years have passed, the work has not yet been executed. I find, Sir, from a book that was recently issued to us containing a report of the irrigation projects, this scheme is included as No. 14 in the list there. I take it that the serial order is of no consequence."

The hon. Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Ayyar :—"The hon. Member is correct."

Rai Bahadur Sir K. Venkatareddi Nayudu :—"I told the House that the commandable area is about 23,000 and odd acres. In this report I find that the area proposed to be brought under irrigation is said to be 19,200 acres. Lower down, however, under the remarks of the Chief Engineer for Irrigation, I find that the irrigated area is estimated at 16,316 acres. I may mention, Sir, in this connexion that for the area originally proposed to be irrigated the water-rate was thought to be fixed at Rs. 6-4-0. The estimated cost of the capital expenditure was somewhere about Rs. 9,60,000. To-day the prices have risen and we find that the estimated cost has gone up to Rs. 18,70,000. That is beyond the control of any Government or Public Works Department authorities. Everything has gone up in price, and the cost of these works has naturally gone up. But there is one point which I wish to bring to the notice of the hon. Member in charge of Irrigation, namely, that this estimate

[Sir K. Venkatareddi Nayudu] [11th December 1923

of 16 thousand acres to be brought under irrigation is very low indeed. I have already said that the area commanded is 23 thousand acres and though in the first part of this book I find 19 thousand, it is now reduced to 16 thousand acres. The result, Sir, is that the cost per acre will be more and the water-rate will have to be enhanced accordingly. I wish to bring to the notice of the hon. Member that it is possible to increase the area to be brought under cultivation by some three or four thousand acres. I do not see the reason why it is now brought down to 16 thousand acres. Possibly the area known as the mamul wet area is excluded. In these villages there is something like 3,832 acres of land said to be mamul wet area. But surely the hon. Member is aware that there was a time when Government actually issued orders to obtain relinquishment fees from the owners of these villages, relinquishing any rights to free water. In fact even the form was prescribed and the Collector of the district was asked to take promissory deeds from these people. I know another thing, namely, that there was a time when no water-tax was charged for taking water from the Godavari river. Later on, Government issued an order to charge water-rate on these so-called mamul wet lands. Out of the eleven villages the people of ten villages pay the water-rate for the so-called mamul wet lands. Only one village called Tillakuppam refused to pay. I was told that with the exception of a single village of about a thousand acres all the other villages have been paying the water-rate. If that is so, Sir, it will be noticed that out of 3,800 acres of land known as mamul wet land at least 3 thousand acres could be charged water-rate and the cost of construction would be reduced and the water-rate need not be raised to the high figure of Rs. 11–8–0 as I find in this book. As I told the House at first it was only Rs. 6–4–0. Later on, when the expenditure rose it was proposed to levy Rs. 9–6–0. I believe that several people have signed agreements willing to pay that rate—nearly three-fourths of the people have already signed. Now, Sir, there is a proposal to raise the rate to Rs. 11–8–0. If this so-called wet area is included certainly the revenue would rise and the percentage of recovery would be quite sufficient to meet the interest on the expenditure proposed to be incurred.

"I have one remark to make to this House. Let them not suppose that the money to be spent on this work will have to be taken from the revenues of the country. It will come from borrowed money, and under the recent Act Local Governments have wide borrowing powers. This I am sure is known to many in this House, though I thought it necessary to remove any misapprehension on that account. Assuming for a moment that this rate of Rs. 11–8–0 would be necessary, or that the mamul wet area is to be excluded in calculating the rate, I would suggest one point for the consideration of the hon. Member in charge of Irrigation. This scheme is only an extension of the existing anicut system and everybody knows that when the anicut system was constructed, it was by money borrowed at the rate of 3 per cent; and to-day, if I am not mistaken, not only the whole money spent on the great anicut system was recovered, but something like 19 or 20 per cent is being realized year after year. I put it to the hon. Member to consider whether it is fair to take into calculation the profits and the losses for each extension, say, the extension of a single canal having a few thousand acres to irrigate, and whether it would not be right to take into account all the profits which the Government derived during the last 30 or 40 years. I mention that, Sir, only to show that this rate of Rs. 11–8–0 need not be charged and the

11th December 1923] [Sir K. Venkatareddi Nayudu]

Government may be content with a lower rate of Rs. 9–6–0. It is only a difference of Rs. 2. As I have already submitted to the House, the villagers are poor. They have suffered on account of want of rains, inability to get the Godavari river water and the inundations of the sea. It will be a great hardship if Rs. 11–8–0 is charged. I hope, Sir, that the Government will be able to see their way to construct this work as early as possible. I do not want to reduce or lower the rate of Rs. 9–6–0. But certainly any increase over that would be a great hardship to the people.

"I hope, Sir, that the hon. Member in charge of Irrigation will take up the matter at the earliest possible moment and begin to execute 11-30 a.m. the project."

Diwan Bahadur K. SURYANARAYANAMURTI NAYUDU :—"Sir, I heartily second the Resolution now moved. The Polavaram project is not a new one as the hon. Mover has said. It was under investigation for more than 12 or 13 years. The investigation is now complete and the preliminary works have also been done. It is high time, therefore, that the work be taken up as early as possible. As regards the rates that are now raised, the hon. Mover has spoken at great length, and I do not propose to waste the time of the House. With these words, I wish to heartily second the Resolution."

The hon. Mr. C. P. RAMASWAMI AYYAR :—"Mr. President, Sir, before dealing specifically with some of the points adverted to by the hon. Mover of the Resolution, let me assure him and the House that it has been my humble endeavour since I took charge of the portfolio of Irrigation to try and extend irrigation facilities as far as possible, and no effort will be spared to get the funds necessary for the inauguration of the great schemes which are now pending execution. Hon. Members of the House who have been undoubtedly following the course of events must have noticed that there are two great schemes on hand, the Cauvery and the Tungabhadra schemes, which are engaging the anxious attention of the Government. I am only mentioning this as a prefatory remark to show that the Government have been conscious that in irrigation lies one of the main roots of prosperity in this country and it has been the object of the Government to extend irrigation facilities in order to produce the much desired result. In regard to this particular project, hon. Members will excuse me if I give them a few details. The investigation of the project, as rightly stated by the hon. Mover, is now complete. The proposal is to extend the Godavari delta irrigation across the Polavaram island, the required supply of water being obtained from the central delta by means of an aqueduct as rightly stated by the hon. Member, Sir Reddi Nayudu. The estimated cost of the scheme as revised comes up to Rs. 18·55 lakhs, and according to the revised revenue forecast furnished by the Board of Revenue in 1922, the total area irrigable under the project is 16,316 acres from which a net revenue of Rs. 1,34,094 is anticipated taking the water-rate at Rs. 9–6–0 which is the rate which the ryots were willing and have agreed to pay. It is found that this project can, now under the classification of the Government of India, be classed as productive only if a water-cess of about Rs. 11–8–0 per acre is guaranteed. Such a guarantee, as hon. Members will know, cannot be enforced unless and until there is on the Statute Book some statute like the Irrigation Law. And one of the main reasons, and indeed, the chief reason why, the execution of this project has been delayed by Government, why it has not been set on foot, is the delay in

the passing into law of the Irrigation Bill. And hon. Members may rest assured that this particular project is one which has obtained the assent of every competent authority which has investigated the matter and will be put on hand at the earliest possible moment subject of course to that consideration which I have already adverted to, namely, the passing of the Irrigation Bill.

"Sir, I shall now deal with some of the points raised in the debate by the hon. Mover. As regards the area, as to which there has been a certain difference of opinion, viz., whether it is 16,000 or 19,000 acres, it is undoubtedly true that the question of the mamul wet is in abeyance and it is the diminution of the total forecasted area of 19,000 by 3,000 and odd acres that has led to the present forecast of 16,000 acres. Following the line of the remarks that fell from the hon. Mover, investigation will at once be set on foot by me in order to ascertain whether the changes in the direction proposed by him cannot with safety be resorted to by the Government. My hon. Friend referred to a recent Act enabling the Local Government to borrow more freely. I wonder if the hon. Member had in his mind the Trade Facilities Act and the resolution of the Economic Conference or whether the hon. Member referred to his own Act."

Rai Bahadur Sir K. VENKATAREDDI NAYUDU:—"Neither, Sir. I referred to the Devolution Rules under the Government of India Act under which greater powers of borrowing were given to the Local Governments."

The hon. Mr. C. P. RAMASWAMI AYYAR:—"It is perfectly true, Sir, that greater powers are given to the Government, but they have very large irrigation programmes everywhere in the country and though the Government of India are much more free in handing over all moneys for irrigation purposes than before, their resources, they have assured us, are not limitless. But so far as this particular scheme is concerned, I do not think financial reasons will stand in the way of its being put into execution. It seems to me, as already referred to by the hon. Mover, that Mr. Morgan's report of the irrigation projects deals exhaustively with this and many other projects and it will be seen that not only this but a dozen other schemes have been held over not for financial reasons—for we are confident that financially we shall be subsidised—but on account of the irrigation law being in a somewhat inchoate condition. Hon. Members will rest assured that when matters are set right with regard to that particular, this scheme shall be pushed forward. In the meantime, I shall set on foot the investigation which is contemplated and suggested in the course of the valuable remarks of the hon. Mover."

Rai Bahadur Sir K. VENKATAREDDI NAYUDU:—"Sir, I wish to take this opportunity of thanking the hon. Member for Irrigation for the kind assurance that he has given and for the kind statement that he has made. He has told us that there are no financial difficulties. He has told us that the Government are willing to execute the work at the earliest possible moment. It is only the difficulty of the passage of the Irrigation Bill that stands in the way. I hope, Sir, that the Irrigation Bill will be introduced in the House as soon as possible and I can assure him that so far as the provisions regarding this particular matter are concerned, enabling the Government to recover such rates as they may prescribe, enabling them to enter into and obtain contracts, to obtain relinquishment deeds and matters like that, he can rest assured that the support of myself and of the hon. Members from my district

will be at his service. There is, however, one remark which I should like to mention in this connexion. If, for any reason, he is not prepared or unable to place the Bill before the House as soon as possible . . ."

The hon. Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Ayyar :—" I expect, Mr. President, to place the Bill before the January session."

Rai Bahadur Sir K. Venkatareddi Nayudu :—" I am glad of that, Sir. I would only add that if for any reason, on his own account or for reasons beyond his control, there should be any delay in the passing of the Bill, I would suggest, Sir, that a separate Bill might be brought for each of such schemes as this. In fact, in England, it is the practice that whenever a certain loan has to be given, or an industrial enterprise has to be financed, or any work has to be executed, a separate Bill is brought forward and passed. I do not mean to suggest that he should undertake such a step here at this juncture. But, if for any reason, the Bill is not to be placed before the House, or has to be delayed in its passage, I submit, Sir, that in order that this project may be executed without delay, a separate Bill may be undertaken and if that is not possible on behalf of Government, I hope that it will not resist any attempt made on the part of private Members to introduce a Bill of their own in order to have the project executed. With these words, I withdraw my Resolution, with the leave of the House."

The Resolution was by leave withdrawn.

COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WATER-SUPPLY TO THE TOWN OF COIMBATORE.

Mr. C. V. Venkataramana Ayyangar :—" Sir, I beg to move—

3. *That this Council recommends to the Government that a Committee of officials and non-officials be appointed to report on the best way of introducing water-supply to the town of Coimbatore at an early date.*

" This proposition, Sir, is very simple. I am sorry to see that the hon. the Minister for Local Self-Government is not here. In his absence, I wish that the hon. the Member in charge of Irrigation at least may hear me."

The hon. Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Ayyar :—" I assume no responsibility for hearing the speeches relating to subjects with which I have no concern."

Mr. C. V. Venkataramana Ayyangar :—" I know, Sir, the hon. Member does not assume any such responsibility. But what I meant was that in the course of my speech some remarks might be found to be of use to the hon. the Law Member as concerning him."

The hon. Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Ayyar :—" I always find the hon. Member's remarks useful."

Mr. C. V. Venkataramana Ayyangar :—" And therefore it is, Sir, that I wish that he listens to me. I was going to say, Sir, that Coimbatore is one of the most important towns and yet it has been suffering the most for want of good water-supply. It is a fact admitted on all hands. It is a pitiful sight, Sir, for any one that is in Coimbatore to see ladies belonging to respectable families walking three or four furlongs to get a potful of fresh-water. Attempts are being made from year to year, decade to decade—shall I say century to century ?—to get some good water-supply for the town of Coimbatore. If doctors differ according to the proverb, engineers seem to